

Serial No. 09/726,710

May 10, 2004

Reply to the Office Action dated March 24, 2004

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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 2-5 and 7 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, Applicant AMENDS claims 2-5 and 7 and CANCELS claims 1 and 6.

Applicant greatly appreciates the Examiner's indication that claim 7 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant has amended claim 7 to be in independent form including all of the features of base claim 6.

Claims 1, 2, 4, and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bernard et al. (U.S. 4,236,125) in view of Okada et al. (EP 0 903 801). Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bernard et al. in view of Okada et al., and further in view of Maeda et al. (U.S. 3,836,874). And claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maeda et al. in view of Okada et al., and further in view of Konishi et al. (EP 0 903 802).

As noted above, Applicant has canceled claims 1 and 6, amended allowable claim 7 to be in independent form including all of the features of base claim 6, and amended claims 2-5 to be dependent upon claim 7. Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that the prior art rejections of claims 1-6 are moot. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the prior art rejections of claims 1-7.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 2-5 and 7 are allowable.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance are solicited.

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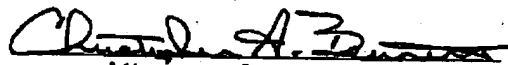
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The Commissioner is authorized to charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-1353.

Respectfully submitted,

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